



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to Tánaiste and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Ireland, H. E. Eamon Gilmore

As delivered by Ambassador Ian Kelly
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
January 12, 2012

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States warmly welcomes you, Tánaiste Gilmore, to the Permanent Council as the OSCE's 2012 Chairperson-in-Office. We appreciate your presentation of Ireland's priorities and commend your deep and personal commitment to the OSCE. We fully expect you will lead a strong and successful Chairmanship. You can count on the support of the United States in achieving your goals.

As we look ahead to our work this year, we must keep our focus on issues of principle and concern to people living in the OSCE region and to our partners beyond it: Human dignity and democracy, justice and tolerance, prosperity and peace. These issues are at the core of the OSCE's comprehensive concept of security and are under threat in the OSCE space. We must work with determination to build our common security on the basis of OSCE principles and to strive for a region in which the use of force is unthinkable, human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully respected, and economic and environmental cooperation is the norm.

The United States shares with Ireland the view that the OSCE's work in the human dimension is a top priority - one where the full implementation of commitments must be taken most seriously. In the past several years, however, human rights and fundamental freedoms have increasingly come under attack, and agreement on strengthening these commitments at the Ministerial Council in Vilnius was regrettably elusive.

We welcome the Irish Chairmanship's focus on Internet freedom. We note that in Vilnius, the United States was proud to have been one of 25 OSCE participating States calling for a simple declaration recognizing that human rights and fundamental freedoms do not change with new technologies and reaffirming that they will honor their obligation to respect the exercise of fundamental freedoms of expression, assembly and association in the digital age. We expect to renew discussion and work on this draft declaration this year. We also applaud your recognition of the importance of strengthening the involvement of civil society in these efforts.

Welcoming your intention to address specific instances where OSCE commitments are not being met, we urge the Chairmanship to advocate for better compliance with OSCE hate crimes commitments, including contributions to ODIHR's hate crimes report. Our discussions last year raised alarms about the gravity of all forms of intolerance, including racism, religious prejudice, as well as hostility to the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered persons (LGBT). The November OSCE Supplemental Human Dimension

Meeting served as a call to action for participating States with harrowing accounts of racial discrimination particularly towards persons of African descent. We firmly believe tolerance for LGBT issues warrants constructive dialogue in 2012, particularly in light of clear evidence that bias-motivated crimes occur towards LGBT persons in the OSCE region. In addition, we hope that part of our tolerance agenda can focus on our educational systems - ensuring that hate is not being taught in schools.

Regarding the Irish proposal to address racism, discrimination and intolerance in sports, the November OSCE meeting that touched briefly on sport reminded us that discrimination and intolerance in society often manifests in sport, among the players, as well as the fans, and it can literally spill into the streets. We therefore applaud Irish efforts to focus on discrimination through this lens. Mindful of the impressive work of organizations like PeacePlayers International in communities from Northern Ireland to South Africa, we encourage you to highlight how sport can build bridges of understanding between communities and cultures.

Tánaiste Gilmore, when we discuss areas where OSCE commitments are not being met, we are reminded of how Roma and Sinti are treated in the region. There is a great deal more that participating States could do in this area, and we think Irish leadership can make important contributions to this issue.

As you note, Tánaiste, the protracted conflicts continue to present challenges to our common security. We welcome Ireland's intention to build on the OSCE's past contributions and look for new ways to boost confidence between parties to conflict. We welcome the appointment of two Special Representatives to bring focus to these issues. Ireland's unique experience in dealing with conflict and in producing a lasting political settlement will be of particular benefit on the protracted conflicts in the OSCE region. We should continue to work toward our aim of restoring a meaningful OSCE presence in Georgia, while continuing to seek creative ways to achieve concrete improvements in the security and humanitarian situation on the ground. We should also continue to build on the resumption of official 5+2 negotiations on the status of Transnistria, and advance agreement on steps to promote the free movement of goods and people and measures to reduce political-military tensions. In that context, we applaud the appointment of Erwan Fouéré as OSCE Special Representative for Moldova and look forward to a report of his visit to the region. Additionally, we should continue to advance our efforts to peacefully settle the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, under the auspices of the Minsk Group.

We welcome the Irish Chairmanship's intention to continue work in the Security Dimension on addressing transnational threats, such as organized crime, cyber security, counternarcotics and terrorism. While we were unable to reach agreement on decisions related to these issues at Vilnius, we believe there is a shared sense of the common threat and on the need for the OSCE to act as a forum for discussion and as a platform to engage in joint action on these issues.

In the economic and environmental dimension, we support Ireland's plan to focus on good governance, with particular emphasis on corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing.

Good governance is an essential element of the OSCE's concept of comprehensive security, and we should strengthen our efforts in this area. We strongly encourage other participating

States to contribute to the Chairmanship's efforts and to ensure high-level participation in the Economic and Environmental Dimension events this year.

We welcome your focus on the implementation of the Ministerial Council decision adopted in Vilnius on the conflict cycle and hope that the Chairmanship will help facilitate the strengthening of the OSCE's capacities to address all aspects of the conflict cycle. We encourage the Chairmanship to bring similar focus to ensuring a robust implementation of the Ministerial Council decisions on enhancing cooperation with Afghanistan and the Mediterranean Partners, and we reiterate our support for the application of Mongolia to become a full participating State.

In all of these endeavors, continued dialogue and commitment to our Helsinki principles will be indispensable. The United States continues to believe in the great promise of Helsinki and is committed to working with our partners to encourage concrete action in the year ahead. With sufficient political will, we can deliver on the promise of the OSCE's principles and commitments, build trust and confidence, and ensure lasting security.

Tánaiste, we wish you and your team the greatest of success in the year ahead. The road of the OSCE chairmanship is not an easy one, but may it always rise up to meet you, and may the wind always be at your back.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.